



Book	Policy Manual
Section	0000 Bylaws
Title	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS
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#### 0169.1 - **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS**

The Board recognizes the value to school governance of public comment on educational issues and the importance of allowing members of the public to express themselves on school matters of community interest.

Members of the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a proposition before the Board.

For purposes of the policy, a proposition is an item before the Board for a vote, and includes, but is not necessarily limited to, all items on the agenda noted as unfinished business, consent, and nonconsent. A proposition may also include a vote on a motion to rescind or to amend action previously taken, but does not generally include items on the special order agenda. A proposition does not include items wherever found on the agenda upon which the Board votes in its quasi-judicial capacity.

The opportunity to be heard need not occur at the same meeting at which the Board takes official action on the proposition if the opportunity occurs at a meeting that is during the decision-making process and is within reasonable proximity in time before the meeting at which the Board takes the official action. This policy does not prohibit the Board from maintaining orderly conduct or proper decorum in a public meeting.

The opportunity to be heard is subject to policies adopted by the Board as follows:

A. Guidelines regarding the amount of time an individual has to address the Board:

1. Each statement made by a member of the public shall be limited to no more than three (3) minutes in duration, once per meeting.
2. The time period may be extended by the presiding officer as may be warranted under the circumstances (e.g., multiple public hearing items, agenda amendments, etc.).

B. Procedures for allowing representatives of groups or factions on a proposition to address the Board:

Rather than all members of groups or factions for or against a proposition addressing the Board at meetings in which a large number of individuals wish to be heard, the Board encourages representatives of such groups or factions to address the proposition in their representative capacity.

C. Procedures or forms for an individual to use in order to inform the Board of a desire to be heard:

Attendees must register their intention to participate in the public portion of the meeting upon their arrival at the meeting by completing a speaker's form at the entry of the meeting hall indicating his/her support, opposition, or neutrality on a proposition; and indicating his/her designation of a representative to speak for him/her or his/her group on a proposition if he/she so chooses. In order for speakers to address the Board, their speaker request form must be submitted before public comment on meeting agenda items begins.

D. Designated period of time for public comment:

The portions of the meeting during which the participation of the public is invited shall be limited to sixty (60) minutes, unless extended by a vote of the Board. The Board also reserves the right to reduce the amount of time each individual, group, or faction has to address the Board in situations where the number of speaker cards submitted reasonably requires

more time than is allotted for public participation under this policy.

The presiding officer of each Board meeting at which public participation is permitted shall administer the rules of the Board for its conduct.

The presiding officer shall be guided by the following rules:

- A. Public participation shall be permitted as indicated on the order of business and before the Board takes official position on any action item under consideration.
- B. Participants must be recognized by the presiding officer and will be requested to preface their comments by an announcement of their name, address, and group affiliation, if and when appropriate.
- C. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer; no person may address or question Board members individually. Staff members shall not be expected to answer questions from the audience unless called upon by the Board Chairman or the Superintendent.
- D. Audio or video recordings are permitted under the following conditions:
  - 1. No obstructions are created between the Board and the audience.
  - 2. No interviews are conducted in the meeting room while the Board is in session.
  - 3. No commentary, adjustment of equipment, or positioning of operators is made that would distract either the Board or members of the audience while the Board is in session.
- E. The presiding officer may:
  - 1. interrupt, warn, or terminate a participant's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant;
  - 2. request any individual to leave the meeting when that person does not observe reasonable decorum;
  - 3. request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person's conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting;
  - 4. call for a recess or an adjournment to another time when the lack of public decorum so interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting as to warrant such action.

No Board action shall be taken on requests made during public discussion unless the Board declares the matter to be an emergency in accordance with current law. Any other requests that the Board chooses to take action on shall be placed on an agenda for a subsequent meeting.

The requirement for public comment on action items does not apply to:

- A. an official act that must be taken to deal with an emergency situation affecting the public health, welfare, or safety, if compliance with the requirements would cause an unreasonable delay in the ability of the Board to act;
- B. an official act involving no more than a ministerial act, including, but not limited to, approval of minutes and ceremonial proclamations;
- C. a meeting that is exempt from F.S. 286.011(the Public Meetings Law); or
- D. a meeting at which the Board is sitting in its quasi-judicial capacity.

These exceptions do not affect the right of a person to be heard as otherwise required by law or Board policy.

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F.S. 286.011

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